

Questions and Answers on the Part B Educational Environments Data Collection for Children Ages 3 – 5

Section 618(a)(1)(A) of IDEA requires that states report the number and percentage of children with disabilities who are: "(i) Receiving a free appropriate public education; (ii) Participating in regular education; (iii) In separate classes, separate schools or facilities, or public or private residential facilities." Consistent with section 618(a)(1)(A), categories for reporting the number and percentage of preschool-aged children with disabilities by educational environment have been revised to more accurately reflect the extent of the children's participation in regular education. Thus, the primary focus of the preschool educational environments data collection has shifted from an emphasis on where the child receives special education and related services to an emphasis on the percentage of time the child spends in an environment with typically-developing age peers.

Inasmuch as regular public preschool education programs are not consistently available through local educational agencies across the country, nor are 3 through 5 year olds generally included in states' mandatory school age range, it is necessary to look to other settings where preschool-aged children are typically found during the day, and to use those settings as proxies for "regular education" settings.

As of SY2006-07, the preschool educational environments data table contains two major categories: (A) children attending a regular early childhood program; and (B) children not attending a regular early childhood program or kindergarten. Category (A) reflects early childhood settings where typically developing children are found during the day in the community and is considered, for data collection purposes, the preschool counterpart of school-aged regular education environments.

OSEP understands the concern that the new reporting requirements may reflect circumstances where parents pay for their child to attend an early childhood program, and that the LEA's preschool educational environments data may be enhanced because of those parental choices. OSEP emphasizes that the revised data collection does not relieve States or local educational agencies of their obligation to meet the least restrictive environment requirements for preschool children with disabilities in accordance with 34 CFR §§300.114–300.120.

1. If a child attends a regular early childhood program for 30 hours per week, but is pulled out of the regular classroom to receive special education services for 3 hours each week, how should the percentage of time in a regular early childhood program be calculated?

Scenario

The child attends a regular early childhood program for 30 hours a week (5 days a week at 6 hours per day), but is pulled out of the regular early childhood classroom for 3 hours each week to receive special education services.

Calculation

Hrs in Reg EC/Total hrs in Ed Env = $27 \div 30 = 0.9 * 100 = 90\%$

Result

Report the child in the regular early childhood program at least 80% of time.

Note that although the child may spend a full day in a regular early childhood program, if the child is taken out of the regular classroom in order to receive special education services, the time spent receiving those services is not included in the numerator. In this scenario, while the child participates full-time in a regular early childhood program, the child receives special education services in a segregated environment.

2. In the above scenario (Question 1), a child receives 3 hours of special education services each week outside of the regular early childhood program and is reported as spending 90% of the time in a regular early childhood program. A child who attends only a 3-hour morning preschool program (5 days a week), and is also pulled out of the early childhood classroom for 3 hours each week for special education services, would be calculated as spending only 80% of the time in a regular early childhood program. Why is the child in this second scenario, who receives the same amount of special education services as the child in the first scenario, reported in a less inclusive category?

In this scenario, although the child is receiving the same amount of special education services, the child is spending less time in a regular early childhood environment. Although both children are spending the same amount of time in a segregated environment, the child in the second scenario is spending a smaller proportion of the time in an educational environment with typically-developing peers. In accordance with IDEA 2004, this data collection seeks information on the extent to which children with disabilities are having opportunities to interact with peers who are developing typically. At this point in time, this data collection is not seeking information on the number of hours that the child is receiving special education services.

3. While it is relatively straightforward to define the length of a standard school day for school-aged children, what does OSEP consider to be a standard school day for a preschool-aged child?

While OSEP recognizes that the amount of time that a preschool-aged child may spend in an educational environment will vary widely, in order to enhance comparability of these data, it is important to set a standard. OSEP has determined that, for the purposes of this data collection, a standard school day for children ages 3 through 5 will be capped at a maximum of 8 hours per day. The hours are limited to Monday through Friday. If a child is in an educational environment for longer than 8 hours per day, such as in the example below, the amount of hours should be capped and the percentage should be calculated as if the child was only in an educational environment 8 hours per day.

Scenario

The child attends a regular early childhood program 27 hours a week (3 days a week at 9 hours per day) and receives special education and related services in a special education program for an additional 12 hours a week (2 days a week at 6 hours per day).

Begin by reducing the number of hours that the child spends in a regular early childhood environment on the days that the total amount exceeds 8 hours per day: